OUTDOOR NEWS FOUNDATION

3350 Annapolis Lane N., Ste B., Plymouth, MN 55447-5389

Outdoor News Foundation Names 2026 Award Recipients

As Give to the Max Day and holiday giving season approach, the Outdoor News Foundation highlights its second-year successes.

Plymouth, Minn. — A respected outdoor media brand since 1968, Outdoor News launched its nonprofit arm, the Outdoor News Foundation, in 2024. Dedicated to recruiting new hunters, anglers, and conservationists, the Foundation works to create lifelong connections among youngsters via old-school recruiting tactics that get them directly outdoors and involved in hunting and fishing culture. In addition to providing young people with subscription access to outdoornews.com, donations to the nonprofit fund scholarships for students enrolled in collegiate fish and wildlife biology studies, environmental learning centers, and outdoors journalism programs.

The Foundation announced its first round of scholarships in November 2025, and it's pleased to expand its scholarship awards in 2026. Recipients include three students (up from two last year) and two college award programs. One program introduces college students to hunting, while the other provides scholarships to students pursuing outdoors and conservation writing.

Outdoor News thanks the many donors who contributed to the Foundation this past year and made these scholarships possible. Read below about the Foundation's achievements for 2026, and please consider supporting its growing efforts to introduce more young people to hunting, fishing, and conservation through Give to the Max Day on Nov. 19 and throughout the holiday season. Even a $25 donation helps put Outdoor News into the hands of young people while supporting the Foundation's educational programs.

The fall 2026 Outdoor News Foundation scholarship recipients include:

Noah Thelen, age 22, from Anoka, Minn. Currently a senior at the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities, Thelen is pursuing a Bachelor's degree in fisheries, wildlife, and conservation biology and expects to graduate in spring 2027 with a goal of becoming a fisheries research biologist with a state or federal agency. He currently works as a lab technician with Minnesota Sea Grant, researching sustainable aquaculture involving yellow perch and golden shiners. Other professional experience includes conducting fish surveys with the

Minnesota Pollution Control Agency and working on invasive carp management along the Mississippi River with the Minnesota DNR. An avid angler and hunter, he also volunteers with conservation and outdoor programs. He has assisted DNR trout research along Minnesota's North Shore, maintains wood duck nesting boxes, and annually supports Anoka Waterfowl for Warriors, which provides free waterfowl hunts for military veterans.

Jace Kelnhofer, age 20, of Marshfield, Wis., is a junior at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, majoring in wildlife management and ecology. Before he wraps up college, the serious outdoorsman says he wants to take classes that aren't specifically tied to his major, including wildland firefighting. Kelnhofer plans to work in the Upper Midwest or Tennessee, preferably in Wisconsin, the Dakotas, or Iowa, to benefit whitetail, pheasant, turkey, grouse, waterfowl, and other game species. A past Outdoor News Junior Pro Team member, Kelnhofer loves duck hunting, and he also remembers his first deer, an 8-point buck, appearing in Outdoor News; he still has a laminated copy of the page in his room.

Ethan Falkinburg, 21, of Avon, Ohio, is a senior at the Ohio State University in Columbus studying natural resources management, working toward a Bachelor of Science in Environment and Natural Resources. After graduation, he looks to pursue graduate school to specialize in avian gamebird conservation. An avid outdoorsman, he has interned at Winous Point Marsh Conservancy and at the Ohio DNR, and Ethan was an Outdoor News Junior Pro Team Member during his youth through the Ohio Outdoor News. His photo was included in many editions while he was hunting or practicing catch-and-release fishing.

Supporting the Next Generation of Conservation Leaders

In addition, the Foundation is supporting a conservation group program for the second straight year that holds events for groups of collegiate and university students to participate in the outdoors.

Delta Waterfowl first launched its University Hunting Program in 2017. The program recognizes that most wildlife management students – the future decision-makers of waterfowl management – have had little or no exposure to duck hunting or first-hand experience of the role of hunting in North American wildlife management. Delta created its UHP to help students understand hunting and habitat decisions. More than 120 colleges have affiliated with the program, and participating university students receive instruction as part of a regularly scheduled wildlife course. Program components include a hunter safety course, a shooting skills day, a mentored hunt at a quality hunting location, and a post-hunt meal and discussion.

For the first time, the Foundation is providing dollars to the Outdoor Writers Association of America's Bodie McDowell Scholarship fund. Named in honor of former OWAA President Bodie McDowell, the scholarships are awarded annually to three or more students.

Recipients must be undergraduate or graduate students in outdoor communications fields including print, photography, film, art, poetry or broadcasting. The scholarships will be awarded in spring 2027 – a year that marks OWAA's 100th anniversary. Learn more or apply for the scholarship via owaa.org.

In addition, the Foundation provided Outdoor News subscription access to nearly 250 young students, plus 2,500 copies of Outdoor News were placed into the hands of youth.

Foundation organizers thank all of the donors who made these scholarships possible, as well as the many people who nominated an impressive corps of young people for this fall's opportunities. Watch for nomination windows again in 2027.

Help us build the next generation of outdoor enthusiasts and conservation leaders.

The Outdoor News Foundation is asking the sporting community to continue helping us recruit the next generation of hunters, anglers, and conservation professionals who will support the outdoors through license purchases and excise taxes on hunting and fishing equipment. Help us build on this year's success by donating on Give to the Max Day, Thursday, Nov. 19.

Visit www.outdoornews.com/foundation to help expand America's unique outdoors heritage.

